

CITIZEN COMMENT

MS Read-A-Thon is a positive step

Congratulations to the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada for their unique approach to fund raising in the form of the MS Read-A-Thon. The read-a-thon is a novel idea that not only helps raise money for one of the most serious diseases in our society, but also encourages elementary school age children to take part in what often seems like a dying pastime—reading.

The idea behind the read-a-thon is simple. The students get pledges for each book they read in a certain time, and the proceeds go to the MS Society. It seems somehow unfortunate that we must use methods such as this to encourage children to read, but it's better than not reading at all.

As Dr. William Fuller, president of the International Reading Association said, "...it takes a lot to get a non-reader to read." Hopefully, students who finish the read-a-thon with a number of books under their belts

will come to realize that reading is an enjoyable experience, and is certainly preferable to television.

It must be said that there is something lacking in our school system when children do not, as a rule, indulge in reading for pleasure.

The MS Society must be commended for coming up with an idea that helps their cause while trying to reverse some of the dangerous trends started by our school systems. Perhaps other charities could take a lesson from an idea such as this.

Although the read-a-thon is a great idea, it is unlikely it will ever replace the more "glittering" charity drives, such as the one masterminded by well-known television personality Jerry Lewis.

Somehow, the Jerry Lewis Read-a-Thon can't compare with the million dollar Jerry Lewis Telethon.



Spring flooding

If second school is needed, why not?

Dear Sir,

My sincere congratulations to Mr. Beatty, our Principal, who, as announced in the Citizen, will be leaving P.S.S. in favour of a better position as Superintendent of Area 6. Whether or not this is the result of the Franco and Anglophone situation at the school, the fact remains that his job is a promotion. "If" his new position is due to the increasing unrest caused by Francophone demands, it should not make Mr. Beatty less appreciative. Even "if" the new Principal is a Francophone there should be no problem since the school is bilingual, or is it?

Am I to be labelled an "agitator" because I am very much concerned about improving the quality of education in this area, especially in the linguistic sense? I would like to voice my opinion, the opinion of a P.S.S. student.

Many French speaking students feel that the quality of the French courses at P.S.S., as well as the atmosphere in general are satisfactory for their development in the French language. Any student may speak French if he so wishes at P.S.S., whether he is asking for help from the guidance or if he is in the halls. However, it must be noted that a student speaking French at P.S.S. is like a bottle carrying a distress call in the ocean, flooded by English all around him. The atmosphere in general certainly does not en-

courage the students to speak French, nor does it help when the member of the staff he is speaking to has a poor pronunciation.

It is not my intention to place the blame on any one group. Some students at P.S.S. claim that they were not aware of any problems before the investigation. Certainly they weren't, because we have just started complaining loudly enough to be heard! This does not change the fact that the problem has existed for many years. In the same way English-Canadians say they didn't believe there were problems in Quebec. This is only because Quebec had not protested in a manner that was evident to all Canadians before November of 1976.

The fate of the Francophone in this region lies in the open mindness with which their English counterparts will judge the situation. Not all Francophones feel that further steps should be taken to assure the preservation of their culture. The growing number of families being assimilated contradicts that opinion.

If we, the citizens of this county are able to provide the necessary requirements for both French and English in our community, then perhaps the entire nation can still hope for unity. If the necessary requirements include a French high school, then why not?

Sincerely,
Dan Marchildon

Positive news is the best-reader

Dear Editor:

I must take this opportunity to thank everyone that has helped with the 1st Lafontaine Brownies. I think instead of reading about people being charged with careless driving, etc. it would be interesting once in a while to read something good and interesting about various people.

I have something to say that is good about various people. Private donations made by Daughters of Isabella, Mr. and Mrs. Homers (senior citizens), Ladies of St. Ann of Lafontaine, Mr. John Bredin, Mrs. Pauline Lamoureux have purchased books and equipment for our pack.

The Lafontaine Parks and Recreation have generously provided us with space, money and time in addition to these people.

A little more than a month ago I telephoned a bakery on a Monday morning. A lady answered and politely said: "I'm sorry we're closed!" I then proceeded to call Holder's

Bakery. They were closed as well but this gentleman said: "Could I help you anyway?" I told him that I wanted to order a chocolate slab cake for twenty Brownies but only for the Tuesday as it was thinking week for the Guides and Scouts and Brownies. "No problem", he said. "Come in on Tuesday and I will have it ready."

I dropped in around 1 p.m. on Tuesday and I had a beautiful cake in addition, he had given each one of the Brownies a beautiful Brownie. No charge for the brownies. How nice. My hat is off to you.

Though we seldom hear about all these small tenderesses done around us, our Brownie pack has had the opportunity to share and benefit from many of these. Not only do we wish to remind these people how we have appreciated them but we'd like to share this with your readers.

Thanks to all.
Linda Desroches
1st L.A. Pack

Our letters policy

The editorial page of this newspaper is open to any reader who may wish to express a thought or opinion on any subject in, or of the news. We'd especially like to see letters or articles dealing with local issues and concerns.

Our only limitation is space. If necessary, letters or articles may be edited at the discretion of the editor, for good taste or for legal reasons. Material may be of any length and if possible, typed or hand-written clearly so that no mistakes will be made.

We will not print any letter sent anonymously to this newspaper. We ask that writers include their name, address and

telephone number in the letter or contribution so that we may verify the authorship.

From this point onward we will publish letters to the editor with names withheld—provided the authors of the letters make themselves known to this newspaper, and provided they have a valid reason for wishing their name withheld from publication.

We believe that there are citizens in this community who wish to communicate their opinions on important issues, but because of valid circumstances, may be compromising their position.

We feel those citizens have a right to make their opinions known.

Teach children by example

Never buy a pig in a poke.
Look before you leap.
Marry in haste: repent at leisure.

We have repeated these good grey principles to our kids ever since they've worn sleepers with drop bottoms. Yet - we are fairly sure that the kids will never follow these hoary precepts. Why? Because we don't follow them ourselves.

One frosty day last January, when the snow was higher than we were, the Squire and I drove past a rolling tract of land, with a "For Sale" sign on the fence. We could see a few trees sticking up here and there, and on a sheltered hillside, there was an abandoned log cabin that looked as appealing as a Christmas card, nestled among the snowdrifts.

Thought It Over
We thought the matter over for maybe half an hour, and decided that we had to own that land. But first we talked it over with people who knew about such things.

"Don't buy a pig in a poke," said one. "There could be a garbage dump, or an automobile graveyard under all that snow."
"No need to hurry," said another. "Wait until the snow melts. Then, if you still like it, make an offer."

"Could be a swamp in there," said a third.

by Shirley

Whittington



"Don't sign anything until the snow goes."

Advice is like a double chin - easy to get, and easy to ignore once you've got it. We listened to all these sage comments, nodded wisely, and went ahead and bought forty acres of snow.

Now the snow is melting week by week, and we are having the time of our lives, discovering something new each weekend.

That little cabin which looked so cosy when it was snuggled in snowdrifts, turns out to have a gaping hole in the roof, a floor like a trampoline and some pretty punky logs at the base. Fortunately the Squire looks upon its restoration as noble and uplifting work.

As the snow melts away from the front of

the cabin, treasures are coming to light - stove lids, blue enameled kitchen ware, an iron springed couch and a rusty shovel.

Festival Of Rocks
We have found that we are the proud owners of a veritable festival of rocks - some as big as Volkswagens. Around their bases, hepatics and ferns are springing up. Later in the spring, there will be wild strawberries, wild onions and other tasty treasures. And deep in the bush, we found a huge cedar, curved at the base, that is as comfortable as a rocking chair.

We now realize that although we own the land on paper, in reality we are only the new tenants. Every time we go out, we have the

feeling that we are being watched by dozens of pairs of eyes.

We've met some of the residents - a scamper of rabbits, a flurry of partridge, and a sluggish garter snake. One day, a porcupine stared pointedly down at us from the top of a tall pine. We have found the cloven prints of deer, and evidence of raccoons. On these warm spring days, hawks circle above the marsh and frogs sing their springtime songs within.

A Marshy Bit
Oh yes - the marsh. Our friends were right. There was, under that blanket of snow, a marshy bit. We prefer to think of it as a spring that needs disciplining.

Every time we go bashing through the bush, we discover that others before us have known this deserted piece of land, and used it to dump their garbage on. Near the fence line, old running shoes, used tires and rusting chunks of automobiles turn up. If we ever catch any of these garbage hurlers in the act, we may find a use for some of our smaller rocks.

If we'd been sensible, and if we'd listened to the advice of our friends, we would have known what we were getting into. And we would have missed all this fun.

He who hesitates is lost.

Having grandkids is 'lots of fun'

ONCE upon a time I spent the best part of a year in a prison camp. The days went by very slowly.

Later, I spent a year in bed in a sanatorium, and the days dragged even more slowly. A week seemed like a month.

Recently, I spent only two weeks in another situation, and the time snailed so slowly that it seemed longer than prison camp and san put together. We had our grandboys for two weeks.

Migawd, the days seemed endless. I'm sure you'll say: "Nonsense. Dear little chaps. I'll bet they were a lot of fun. How can he say that?"

Lots of Fun
Sure they were a lot of fun. Or let's switch that to they had a lot of fun. But who wants fun for 16 to 18 hours a day? Not a middle-aged couple, one with a bad back, the other with jangled nerves to the point of screaming when the toast pops up in the toaster.

We weren't like that when they arrived, but we were close to stretcher cases by the time they left. And I'm not exaggerating one whit.

It all started when my wife got sentimental and decided to help our daughter, who is in the final throes of studying to become a teacher, and was getting behind in her work. "Bill, we're going to take the kids for two weeks and give Kim a break. It won't hurt us and it might even be fun. We may never have the chance to have them like this, all to ourselves, again."

Well, I've got news for her. We not only might not. We will not. Not unless it's over my dead corpse. That's a lot of nots, but I'm in a rather negative mood. It doesn't help

by Bill Smiley



that I get a pain like a knife in the back when I reach for a fag or a beer. Yep, they've sprung my discs again.

Just for example, as I write, the TV repairman is working behind me. My wife got a terrible scare today. The littlest tad, who is as destructive as a bull elephant at a quilling bee, got in behind the TV when her back was turned for a second. There was a hiss and a terrible stench of something burning.

She snatched him away, tore the plug out of the wall, and, much to their disgust, pushed the two of them out of the room. They weren't a bit scared, as older kids might be, but kept trying to push by her to see the fun.

Tossed Snack
Right now, Tom the TV man looked up, grinning, and holding a half-scorched piece of Canadian cheddar. The little b...oy had tossed his afternoon snack, which had purloined lord knows where, into the innards of the machine.

Ever dropped some cheese on a burner on the stove? It stinks. No wonder the old lady panicked.

That's just a sample. Here are some

miscellaneous items. One floor lamp with dangling crystals, replacement value about \$160, flattened with a great clanging of chandelier-like glass. Frame bent, shade broken. We sat with a bare light burning, as though we lived in a cheap hotel room.

One Indian rug, recently cleaned at considerable outlay, looking as though a tribe of baboons had been playing football with their own excrement. One chesterfield suite, smeared with jam, honey, toothpaste, and various other indescribable but sticky substances.

One hardwood floor, recently refinished, looking as though the Canadiens hockey team had been practicing on it. I could go on and on, but it makes me mad, and it makes my wife cry.

Out of Shape
And that's not to mention all the little stuff, broken, bent out of shape, rendered hors de combat by jumping on it or hitting someone over the head with it.

The day begins about 6.30, with the sound of one small boy babbling happily to himself. A few minutes later, there is a thump as he hits the floor, the padding of bare feet, and you

look up to find the tiny turkey by your bedside grinning hugely, probably with your shaving cream in one hand, top off, something dangerous, like a leg off a stool, in the other, and his diapers hanging down to his knees, ready for some action.

From there on it's sheer horror, as the biting and the fighting and the dancing and the shouting commence. Try to iron, one of them is attempting to pull the iron on his head. Try to vacuum, and they pull it apart in the middle and use it as a voice tube. Try to sew and the smaller one is stuffing his mouth with pins. Try to read a paper and a body comes hurtling across the room and leaps on to your groin, scattering the newspaper.

Silence Worse
Even worse than the racket are the silences. If there isn't any sound, you leap to your feet and run to where the silence is. They are inevitably pulling the knobs off the TV, tearing up a manuscript, or stuffing their mouths with pennies they found in some forgotten drawer.

Small boys should be treated like monkeys. They should be kept in cages containing lots of things to climb on, sawdust on the floor, and lots of peanuts lying around for the picking.

It's not really what the boys are doing to us or the house. It's what they're doing to our marriage. We're so exhausted and rattled that we're re-examining.

"I was up with that child at 6.15."
"Yeah, but who changed his diapers?"
"Who got them their breakfast?"
"Sure, but who took them out for a walk and broke up three fights?" And we start to shout. And the kids wink at each other and grin.

Why can't they be like we were?

They've driven parents crazy since time immemorial, I'm sure.

They all have their own particular habit or style that gnaw at grown ups senses until they almost want to scream.

They drove Paul Lind to ask the musical question in Bye Bye Birdie "What's the matter with kids today?"

The other day at lunch the conversation got around to kids and the general consensus around the table was they were generally asking to strange visitors from another planet, far beyond the comprehension of mortal grownups.

The one that inhabits my house has just turned 10 and where it was hard to get him to pick up a bar of soap once every month he has suddenly taken to constant bathing and hair washing sessions that nearly make him late for school.

He has also suddenly taken up a great interest in clothing.

His mother recently bought him a complete new outfit of jeans to replace the pair of Levis he had managed to wear out in every conceivable location by having them on for at least six straight months.

He trundled off to school in the new garb and returned vowing never to let a grown up

by Rod McDonald



outfit him again and threatening never to let the new jeans near his body.

After some quick questioning it was soon discovered that the schoolyard Pierre Cardin had pob poohed the new jeans because they obviously had not been faded to within an inch of falling apart.

Needless to say, to him it was a tragedy. I was tempted to deliver a story over the dinner table about the rights of the individual in modern society, but his grandmother slowed me down with some reflections about my wife's childhood.

"Your mother wanted everything the other girls had when she was your age," she told him.

The look of approval on his face at Gran-

ny's intervention would have shamed the Cheshire Cat.

I was about to deliver a quick sermon about the value of a dollar and how his mother had only done what she thought was best, but his grandmother's words brought back another part of that song, "Why can't they be like we were? Perfect in every way."

It's a fact that peer pressure plays an important part in all our lives from about the time we turn 10 and beyond.

When I was about his age everyone in my school who was anyone had to have a sweatshirt. And not just any old sweatshirt, but a wine coloured sweat shirt.

They were worn constantly and one can imagine how well a lime green collared shirt

went with a wine sweatshirt. Especially when it was worn with penny loafers and white socks.

When I hit high school the Ivy League dress pants and sweater look was big among campus heavies, but as the 1960s rolled by the trend swung sharply to "Early Canadian Grub."

Everyone wore jeans and, although I kept telling myself it was because they were comfortable, deep down in my soul I might very well have been laughed out of existence without them.

And then with the jeans came work boots. They were heavy, awkward and didn't endear many people's nostrils to your feet when you took them off, but we were positive they looked really sharp.

I continued that way through college because after all we were poor students even though we lived at home and had mother get our meals on time.

When I look back on my wardrobe when I graduated I'm surprised anyone ever let me near their office.

And what about the kid?

Well, he'll be wearing the new jeans. But next wash day we'll see if we can sneak a little extra bleach into the wash, just for old time's sake.

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